

No Condemnation

Romans 8:1

Series: Promise Keeper

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The promise we are looking at today is probably my most beloved and favorite promise that God gives in scripture. In fact, it's not only my favorite promise, but it is my favorite verse in probably what is my most favorite chapter in all the Bible. If we were preaching this series on favorite chapters in the Bible, no doubt, I'd be picking Romans chapter eight.

We have Matthew, Mark, Luke and John's gospel...and some have referred to the book of Romans as the 5th gospel...the gospel of Paul.

One commentator pointed out **"If the Bible is a ring and the book of Romans is a precious stone, chapter eight would be the sparkling point of the jewel."**

Martin Luther – "The masterpiece of the New Testament."

Douglas Moo – "The inner sanctuary within the Cathedral of the Christian faith; the tree of life in the midst of the Garden of Eden; the highest peak in the range of mountains."

D.L Moody – "I would rather live in Romans 8 than in the Garden of Eden. Man fell in the garden, but here we are told we will never fall again."

The chapter starts with the bookend "no condemnation" and it ends with the bookend "no separation". The first bookend is the promise we are looking at and I'm encouraging you to claim NOT just today, but multiple times a day, EVERY day, for the rest of your life.

I'm calling the message: **No Condemnation**

Rom. 8:1 – "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Now, this is a GIANT statement for Paul to make and for the Christian to believe. On the surface it sounds too good to be true – NO condemnation!

I've always been told that if something sounds too good to be true, then it probably is. What I want us to do is look at this promise and see how Paul could make such a statement. As we look at it, we will see that this promise has:

- something to do with our past...
- it has something to do with our present...
- and it has something to do with our future...
- it affects all of our life, all of our day...

Let's start with: **Our Past**

Paul states there is now no condemnation, which meant at one time there was condemnation! This is in essence what the book of Romans is about – it's Paul's magnum opus concerning the gospel.

For seven chapters, Paul has been explaining the gospel:

- why it's needed...
- what it entails...

And a key part of the gospel is understanding our guilt before a holy God AND that because of our sin we rightly deserve condemnation.

Now, let me give you a definition or perhaps color in the lines to help understand what condemnation is a bit more clearly. This is a legal term – think courtroom!

When someone commits a crime and is found guilty of committing that crime, the judge issues a sentence of punishment. He condemns the criminal. In other words, there are consequences for breaking the law.

You read any commentary on this passage, and it won't be long before you come across the term "penal servitude". This word "condemnation" includes not only the "guilty verdict" but also the sentence and punishment that come along with that verdict. And our punishment is condemnation.

So, what are we guilty of you might ask that deserves condemnation? Why do we rightly deserve condemnation?

Paul sums it up in one word: SIN.

For Paul, when he looks at man...and when he looks at God's law and the ability for man to uphold that law...to live perfectly according to the law – he says, "No way...we are guilty – ALL of us!"

We miss the mark of living up to God's holiness which is what the word "sin" means – missing the mark...and ALL of us are guilty!

We read words like this from Paul in Romans:

Rom. 3:23 – "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

As a result of this sin...there is a sentence...there is a penalty...we are condemned! And our sentence is: DEATH!

Rom. 6:23a – "For the wages of sin is death..." (physical and spiritual)

Now, we'll work this out in fuller detail here in just a moment but let me cover one aspect of this condemnation that is critically important to understand. This will help us see our hopelessness before God and will make this promise even MORE precious once we see and realize the full argument Paul is making here about sin and it's resulting condemnation.

Often times when we think about sin, we think about the action of our sin. In other words, we see sin is something we "do".

- We lie...
- We cheat...
- We steal...
- We slander...
- We covet...

What Paul teaches in Romans though is that sin is NOT just something we do...it's who we are. He uses a term over and over again, that we are "under sin". (7:14 – "sold under sin")

Meaning...this is SO important to understand. We sin in behavior...in action...BECAUSE we are sinners at the core of who we are!

Paul's argument is we got our sin nature honestly. We inherited it from our great, great grandfather, Adam. Listen to:

Rom. 5:12, 18a– "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...Therefore as one trespass led to condemnation for all men..."

When you and I are born, we are born with an imputed unrighteousness. From the core of who we are, we are sinners and from the start that sin separates us from God.

So, we are sinners by nature AND we are sinners by choice.

Illus. baby - put a baby or a child in a room with another baby or child and watch selfishness on display. Guarantee you mom and dad did not teach "don't share" or "hit the other baby". Why do infants...children behave this way – it's who they are!

We lie, cheat, steal, and covet because that is by nature WHO we are and so, because of nature and because of choice, we are rightly called sinners and we rightly deserve condemnation, which is death (physical and spiritual)...it's separation from God forever and ever.

This is our lot in life "pre-Jesus". Pre-Jesus we are condemned in our sin, by our sin...and we have NO HOPE!

This is exactly what Paul is arguing before this incredible promise in Rom. 8:1. Just look back at:

Rom. 7:14-24 (it's lengthy, but needs to be read because it sets up the promise we are looking at today) – **“For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. (Keep in mind, as Paul writes this, he's been a believer for 20 something years!) For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh (sin nature). For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”**

Can't you just sense the hopelessness? He wants to do right, but this sin nature is strong it causes him to want to rebel against the God that he desires to serve!

He's held captive to the law of sin...and here's the deal: so too are you and I held captive by sin. We are in “chains” – like Paul, “sold under sin!”

Now, if we left it right here...we'd be in trouble wouldn't we? Because as Paul just argued, we can't help ourselves – NOT with this issue!

Illus. Amazon self-help –There are thousands of books out there about self-help...there's NOT one that shares how you can avoid the verdict of sin and the judgment of condemnation that is justly ours.

We are guilty, guilty, guilty and rightly deserving of the condemnation handed down. We deserve death!

Just let that sit for a moment! Let's read **Rom. 7:24** (one more time) – **“Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”**

Get the picture...let's go back to our courtroom, and let's make this personal. You (me) we are standing before God, our Judge. And the evidence is stacked against us!

- Every impure thought we've ever had...
- Every evil word we've ever said...
- Every selfish motive we've given into...
- Every immoral act we've ever participated in...

It's there for God to see! “Exhibits 1- to a hundred million, you Honor!” This trial is going to last a while just because of the evidence stacked against us...and there is not a lawyer out there to represent us! No way are they taking our case when they see the evidence! And:

- There's no talking your way out...
- There's no bargaining your way out...
- There's no deal-making in this situation...

You (me), we are guilty and worthy of being condemned and separated from God forever...the ONLY thing separating us from the gavel banging and the sentence coming down is God himself in the person of Jesus!

Rom. 5:8-9, 18-19 – “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood (legal term – “declared righteous”), much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God... Therefore, as one trespass (Adam and Eve in the Garden) led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness (Jesus on the cross!) leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience (Adam) the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience (Jesus) the many will be made righteous.”

Rom. 6:22-23 – “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Rom. 7:25a – “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

And I wish there wasn't a chapter break here! Because our promise follows this!

Rom. 8:1 – “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

This promise speaks to our past! We were guilty of sin and rightly condemned. But, Jesus in going to the cross and shedding his blood set us free from sin and the ensuing penalty of condemnation - i.e. death.

Jesus took the verdict and the sentence on himself! Eugene Peterson in his Message translation refers to “condemnation” as “ a continuous, low lying black cloud” that is over our lives.

“In Christ” (a phrase we will get to in just a moment) that cloud has been lifted! The “ vicious cycle/circle of sin” as JB Phillips translated it, is broken.

This promise speaks to our past. But it also has very much to do with: **Our Present**

It's actually written in the present tense. Look at it again:

Rom. 8:1 – “There is therefore now (at the present time) no condemnation (not even one! That's how good the death of Christ on our behalf is and the resurrection is verification of our penalty being righteously paid for and covered in full) **for those who are in Christ Jesus.**”

There are two present realities that we need to grasp in order to fully appreciate what's being said here. The first reality is:

1. We are free from the law of sin

Because of what Jesus has done in the past, we are currently, present day, right now “free from the law of sin and death.” This is Rom. 8:2.

See, once we trust in Christ we are no longer tied to the old law, but rather a new “law”...what is referred to as the “law of this Spirit” is instituted.

Rom. 8:2 – “For the law of the Spirit (new law) has (past tense with ongoing results) set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death (old law).

We have been set free from having to obey the law perfectly in order to have a right standing with God or before God. And now, our right standing with/before God comes via our right position of being “in Christ”.

AND if we are “in Christ” (a phrase we’re about to get to) our position is secure and there is now (present tense) no condemnation.

This is an incredibly, glorious truth! But it’s only for those “in Christ”. Second reality:

2. We are free to live by the Spirit

Rom. 8:3-4 – “For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. (we could not obey the law – by nature we are sinners and it would be impossible to attain righteousness by upholding the law) By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

Because of what Jesus has done...and this new law...the law of the Spirit – the Spirit is who lives in us – because of this, we now have the power and ability to walk righteously.

Those of us “in Christ” not only have had a nature change, but from that nature comes a behavior change. “In Christ” the sin nature problem and the choosing of sin has been taken care of!

We are free from the law of sin and free to live by the Spirit – IF are “in Christ”. “There is therefore no now condemnation for those who are “in Christ”.

This phrase “in Christ” appears 119 times in Paul’s letters. It was by far one of his most favorite terms to use...it was meant to show how we are NOT just united “WITH” him, but we are actually “IN” him as a branch is in a vine!

Listen to some ways this “union” is described in scripture. And by the way, any time you see this phrase “in Christ”, you can write it down as a “promise to claim”. If it’s “in Christ”, it’s a promise!

Rom. 3:24 – “and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

2 Cor. 5:17 – “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

Gal. 3:26 – “for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.”

Eph. 2:13 – “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

Because we are “in Christ”, we are no longer living according to the old law of sin and death, but we are free to live by the law of the Spirit and life – and there is therefore “now” no condemnation!

Illus. Good practice - You can write in the margin of your Bible any sin you may be struggling with right now and the guilt that comes along with it. That isolation you feel from God when you make that decision to sin against him...some of you are not walking as close to him as you ought and you know exactly what you should do, but you’re not doing it!

- The time alone is not there...
- Your prayer life is not there...
- Guilt almost overwhelms you...

Write those sins...those thoughts out in the margin of your bible and over them write “no condemnation”! You are “in Christ”.

This is so important because there are going to be times in your life that you are going to HEAR condemnation and you are going to FEEL condemnation...and listen to me, you must reject ALL of that by faith.

There is a reason that Satan is called the “accuser of the brethren”. You know where this comes from?

Rev. 12:10 – “And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.”

This is what the Enemy does...he accuses us before God...hurls accusations at us. We sin against the Lord, and he condemns! We hear things like:

- “I can’t believe you would do something like that!”
- “You call yourself a believer after acting like that?!”

- “Who do you think you are? You are not worthy to be called a son or daughter of God.”

And if we are not careful, we will listen to that voice and then FEEL condemnation and Jesus never meant for those of us “in Christ” to live that way.

If we are “in Christ” there is NO CONDEMNATION regardless of what you hear from the enemy OR feel because of what he might say to you.

Now, brief excurses...there is a difference between the conviction of the Spirit and the condemnation that comes from Satan. Let me just show it to you in this little chart here (**SHOW CHART**).

If you are “in Christ”, we go off conviction, NOT condemnation. And by the way, while we’re on this tangent, let me go on one more as it relates to being “in Christ”...this is also why water baptism is significant. It is an outward symbol to show others that you are entering a union with Christ!

Illus. Student camp – 79 baptisms...this is why we celebrate baptism. It’s the outward way of showing others we are “in Christ”.

Rom. 6:3-4 – “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? (Spirit baptism – at the moment we trust Christ, we are baptized by the Spirit...we are joined “in him” – water baptism symbolizes this!) ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

This promise deals with our past...it deals with our present...and it also has MAJOR implications and deals with: **Our Future**

Illus. Lanier Library lecture with N.T. Wright – why am I preaching this?

“The Greek word *nyn* ‘now’ is important here. There is therefore *now* no condemnation. This is both logical (‘now therefore’) and temporal (‘in the present time’). The future verdict can be announced in the present, because the Messiah has dealt with his people’s sins, and the spirit indwells them to bring them to resurrection.”

See, we have a day coming when we will stand before God. And the beauty of welcoming Christ’s atoning, substitutionary sacrifice by faith into our life is that once we have done this...once we are in union with him...once we are “in him”, we will always be “in him”.

This is a wonderful promise of the doctrine we call the perseverance of the saints! You might have heard “once saved always saved” – I like to say, “If saved, always saved.”

The glorious promise of Rom. 8:1 is what is true for Christ, is true for his sons and daughters – this is what being “in Christ” means. The hymnist put it like this: “We are dressed in his righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne!”

Paul knows this and it’s why he bookends this incredible chapter with “no condemnation” and “no separation”.

This last bookend is worth reading because it’s truth...its promise is tied to (v. 1).

Rom. 8:31-35, 37-39 – “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

³⁴ **Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through**

him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“No separation” is possible because “no condemnation” is a reality. It’s a promise that we can claim and cling to from now until the day we stand before God.

Rom. 8:1 – “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Illus. Chuck Swindoll and snake story – Speaking of “cling” this is how we need to cling to this promise – our spiritual life depends on it.

Would you pray with me?

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.

